

LINER NOTES

[LED KAAPANA & BOB BROZMAN](#) **IN THE SADDLE**

"We're like two kids playing together with our toys," – Bob Brozman

Since the release of [KIKA KILA MEETS KI HO'ALU](#) (Dancing Cat 38031) in 1997, slack key master Led Kaapana and steel guitar wizard Bob Brozman have performed over fifty concerts together, appeared on Hawai'i Public Television's NA MELE: TRADITIONS IN HAWAIIAN SONG music series and made a live concert video for the Vestapol company. Both have also maintained extremely busy solo careers and carried out endeavors in many other formats as well.

Led has been performing with his trio I Kona, as a soloist, and with several all-star Hawaiian groups. Travel increasingly fills his itinerary as requests for bookings come in from all over the islands, the West Coast, Japan, Europe and other newly emerging hotbeds of Hawaiian music. "The audience for slack key is really spreading out," he says. "Seems like all the top performers are constantly on the go all over the world. That's really good for the mileage plus, but it's important to keep the home bases covered too." At home, Led continues to work the club and party circuit that provided him with his first professional experience over thirty-five years ago backing up his mother, singer Tina Kaapana, and his uncle, slack key legend Fred Punahoa. Led also remains a regular at the annual slack key festivals. "The festivals are really important because they allow whole families to get together and enjoy the music," observes Led. "They also give audiences a chance to meet the artists and sit in on workshops, which helps spread the style. Whenever I can, I try to make it to all the festivals and to do workshops."

Led has also been recording. He and longtime rhythm guitarist Alike Odom recently reunited with bassist Bernard Kalua to re-form the original I Kona. Their 1998 CD, HAWAII KA PU'UWAI (Leo Nui 001), features Hawaiian favorites and Led's celebrated rendition of the popular reverb drenched oldie **Pipeline**. "I love that surf rock guitar sound," he says, "and always get a lot of requests to play that kind of music. It's really easy to adapt it to slack key."

For 1998's [WALTZ OF THE WIND](#) (Dancing Cat 38016), Led mixed his slack key and hot 'ukulele with country music. "When I was young I listened a lot to guitarists like Chet Atkins and Roy Clark," Led recalls. "Since then I always wanted to record in Nashville." The sessions brought Led together with old friends like dobro monster Jerry Douglas, acoustic steel master Bob Brozman, pianist George Winston, and new ones like Alison Krauss, Ricky Skaggs, Pat Bergeson, Sam Bush and Sonny Landreth.

Though his website, www.bobbrozman.com, can provide more specific details and updates, Bob has spent the last three years touring the U.S., Canada, Japan and Europe. "I'm adding new countries yearly," he says, "including, most recently, Australia and South Africa." All this traveling has meant crossing paths with a wide variety of musicians, which has generated projects with over four dozen musicians in 13 countries. Within the last thirty-six months as of September 2000, Bob has recorded with American roots musicians Woody Mann, David Grisman and Mike Auldridge, African traditionalist Djeli Moussa Diawara, Okinawan sanshin performer Takashi Hirayasu, Hindustani legends Debashish and Subhashis Bhattacharya,

Reunion Islander René Lacaille, and many others. His 1999 duet with slack key great Cyril Pahinui, [FOUR HANDS SWEET & HOT](#) (Dancing Cat 38048) received a Na Hökü Hanohano Award in Hawai'i as Instrumental Recording of the Year.

Besides going to meet musicians in their home countries, Bob also enjoys gathering them together for concerts and jams. At the 1999 Festival d'Été in Quebec, for example, he assembled an international troupe that included Debashish & Subhashis from India; Takashi from Okinawa; René from Reunion; Djeli from Guinea; George Pilali from Greece; Romane, the French Gypsy guitarist; La Familia Valera from Cuba; and George Gao from China. Also in 1999, Bob and Woody Mann co-founded International Guitar Seminars, which hosts over 120 students annually at sites in California and New York. The team has pioneered a week-long, deluxe workshop.

Despite all their activity, both Led and Bob made it a priority to make a second album together. (A third one is planned as well.) Bob says he feels that the opportunity to tour with Led in the last few years deepened their musical relationship considerably. "When we made the first CD, I knew only 1900 to 1935 steel playing," Bob says. "I'd never accompanied slack key before, except once in a jam session with Led eight years earlier. On this second album you can hear a lot of interaction of musical parts, emotional and muscular feeling, and plenty of talk story. As I see it, through being able to spend so much playing time together, we've changed in two main ways. First, Led and I have developed a nearly telepathic musical rapport enabling us to arrange on-the-fly, improvise down to small muscular changes in the sound of the music, and to sound rehearsed without ever rehearsing. Second, I have developed a whole new language of accompanying-slack-key steel techniques. And I've learned a lot about the act of playing music simply from playing alongside this amazing guy I consider to be a genius."

The Songs

PROGRAM 1

1. *Ami Ami Slack Key* (instrumental)

Led: 6 string guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D)

Bob: National Reso-Phonic Tricone guitar in G Major Tuning

Like all Led and Bob's original compositions, this upbeat melody grew out of an improvisation. Both Led and Bob love to jam and play for hours, on stage and off – at their homes, at hotels, in vans, even in airport lobbies. "Sometimes I'll be at the gate waiting for the plane to start boarding and I'll bust out my 'ukulele, and start playing," Led says. "Pretty soon the other passengers gather around and clap, make home videos, and dance hula."

Aware that such free-flowing spontaneity is at the heart of slack key, producer George Winston encourages jamming in the studio. "When you can feel the clock ticking at a recording session it makes everybody uptight, and the music can sound nervous," Led says. "When nobody rushes, you have the freedom to relax and stretch out. That's the way all the aunties and uncles played slack key back home in Kalapana." This piece is the first

time Bob has been recorded playing slack key guitar. He and Led trade electrifying solos with incredible improvisations and interplay between the two guitars.

2. **Bob & Led's Modern Slack Key** (instrumental)

Led: Santa Cruz Baritone 6 string guitar in Bb Major7/9 Tuning (F–Bb–D–F–A–C), tuned down to G

Bob: 1927 Weissenborn Hawaiian guitar in G Major Tuning

While Bob and Led both love older Hawaiian music styles, they also enjoy experimenting with new tunings and techniques. Refined over many hours playing together on tour, this evocative original creates a richly textured atmosphere full of mysterious twists and features Led's original unique tuning. Note the use of the Lydian mode (a major scale with the 4th note of the scale raised a half step) in the first section with the C major chord. Bob's 2–hand damping technique, most obvious near the end, is an original innovation. "It allows the steel to assume the role of a bass," he says. "This gives Led more support and adds another color to the sound."

In this song Bob and Led play in tunings in different keys, but Led is tuned down to the key of G to match Bob's G Major Tuning. This is a common practice when two slack key guitarists play together, accomplished by tuning up or down, or capoing the guitar. It is also very common to have both guitarists play in different tunings in the same key.

3. **Meleana E** (vocal)

Led: 6 string guitar in C Wahine "Leonard's C" Tuning (C–G–D–G–B–D)

Bob: Bear Creek Kona Hawaiian guitar in G Major Tuning, tuned up to C

Inspired by the exploits of a real person of Hawaiian–Scandinavian ancestry, this party favorite, translated as "Mary Ann," dates back to the early 1900s. It enjoyed wide circulation in the 1920s and 1930s, especially among steel guitarists. Bob cites Sol Ho'opi'i's 1927 version as the first really great Hawaiian 78rpm record he heard, and one of his major motivations to learn steel. Aunty Genoa Keawe re–popularized the song in the 1950s, at the end of the 78 rpm era, on the 49th State label and, later, on her classic long playing album GENOA KEAWE SINGS LUAU HULAS (Hula 514). Bla Pahinui has recorded two great slack key versions of it for Dancing Cat, on his albums [MANA](#) (Dancing Cat 38033) and [WINDWARD HEART – LIVE SOLO](#) (Dancing Cat 38052).

Led first recorded **Meleana E** in 1996 with his friends, The Ho'opi'i Brothers, on their first CD, HO'OMAU (Mountain Apple 2037). Like the Ho'opi'is, Led is a wonderful *leo ki'eki'e* (Hawaiian falsetto singer) and ornaments his performance with the subtle manipulations of tone, breath, endurance and volume so highly prized in that tradition. "I've always loved the song," Led says. "Usually it's played fast, but Bob plays in the old style, so I slowed it way down like a memory of long ago or a dream." This extended version is a beautiful epic odyssey, with Led and Bob taking great solo after solo in between the vocal verses. Note the beautiful romantic introduction with Bob playing C major 7/9 to C 6/9 chords over Led's C major chords.

The tuning Led uses for this song, a C Wahine Tuning ("Wahine" refers to a tuning with

a major 7th note, here the 2nd string B note), is often called "Leonard's C" because it was used prominently by the late, great Leonard Kwan (1930–2000), one of the three most influential slack key guitarists in history (along with the late Philip "Gabby" Pahinui, 1921–1980, and the late Sonny Chillingworth, 1932–1994). Bob specially designed the Bear Creek Kona guitar he plays here with a shorter neck so that it could be tuned five frets high. He plays in the G Major Tuning, therefore sounding in the key of C. Again note the use of the two different tunings.

4. *No Ke Ano Ahiahi* (instrumental)

Led: Santa Cruz Baritone 6 string guitar in G Major Tuning, tuned down to F

Bob: Weissenborn guitar in G Major Tuning, tuned up to the key of C and playing in the 5th position in the key of F

Mele inoa (name chants/songs) comprise an important part of popular Hawaiian music. Composed as a gift, a *mele inoa* becomes the property of the person for whom it has been written. He or she may then pass it down within the *'ohana* (family) as a treasured, often closely guarded heirloom. While in traditional Hawaiian culture everyone receives at least one *mele inoa*, *ali'i* (royalty) frequently receive many. This traditional *mele inoa*, which translates as "In the Evening Time" (with an additional sense of stillness, quiet and reverie) and honors King William Lunalilo (1835–1874), describes bittersweet feelings in the evening hours before a long trip. The song was rediscovered by the great 'ukulele player and film documentarian Eddie Kamae, who recorded it with the great slack key guitarist Gabby Pahinui on the album EDDIE KAMAE AND THE SONS OF HAWAII (Panini 1001). Prominent slack key versions have also been recorded by Gabby Pahinui on THE GABBY PAHINUI HAWAIIAN BAND–VOLUME 2 (Panini 1008), Cyril Pahinui on [6 and 12 STRING SLACK KEY](#) (Dancing Cat 38010), and Keola Beamer on [WOODEN BOAT](#) (Dancing Cat 38024).

For Led and Bob, the song's stately grandeur inspired an orchestral approach. "This is the symphonic or epic side of Hawaiian song," Bob says. Their whimsical and soulful solos amplify this. They both play in the G Major Tuning, but interestingly in different ways—Led tunes his G Tuning down two half steps to sound in the key of F, and Bob is on the short neck guitar, so his G Tuning is tuned up to the key of C while he plays in the 5th position, which would normally sound in the key of C on a regular length guitar and sounds in the key of F here.

5. *Lei 'Ohu* (instrumental)

Led: 6 string guitar in G Major Tuning

Bob: 1927 Weissenborn Hawaiian guitar in G Major Tuning

Meaning "Adorned With a Lei," this George Akiu composition takes us to four islands: Hawai'i, Maui, O'ahu and Kaua'i. We receive in turn, leis of lehua (representing Hawai'i), roselani (Maui), 'ilima (O'ahu) and mokihana (Kaua'i). Bob says that **Lei 'Ohu** was really popular with steel players in the 1920s, which carries over into the mood and style of his virtuoso performance. The song is also popular with slack key players, especially since Gabby Pahinui's classic version on GABBY (Panini 1002), the 1972 masterpiece affectionately known as "the brown album." Bob has also recorded the song with Gabby's

son, Cyril Pahinui, on the pure duet album of slack key and acoustic steel, [FOUR HANDS SWEET & HOT](#) (Dancing Cat 38048). (Cyril also recorded this song solo on his recording [6 and 12 STRING SLACK KEY](#) – Dancing Cat 38010.) Comparing the Bob and Cyril version with this one illustrates the individualistic nature of slack key. "Music has to come from your heart," says Led. "What other people play can inspire you, but if you don't express what you feel inside, you're just making a lot of empty noise."

6. *Wai'alaie Waltz* (instrumental)

Led: Santa Cruz Baritone 6 string guitar in Standard Tuning (E–A–D–G–B–E), playing in the key of G, but tuned down 2 half steps to sound in the key of F

Bob: 1927 Weissenborn Hawaiian guitar in G Major Tuning, tuned to G and playing in F
Subhashis Bhattacharya: Tablas

The composer Mekia Kealakai, who also wrote the standard song **Lei 'Awapuhi** and became the leader of the Royal Hawaiian Band, based this song on a Spanish waltz he heard sung by laborers in 1902. Wai'alaie is an area on O'ahu that once harbored a summer retreat for King Kalakaua. By adding a Mexican–inspired 6/8 feel to this sturdy old waltz, Led & Bob honor the original *paniolo* (Mexican cowboys), who came to Hawai'i in the 1830s and quite possibly introduced the guitar. The performance opens with a gently probing rubato section, after which the rhythm cycle kicks in. Indian percussionist Subhashis Bhattacharya then joins the duo on tablas.

Based in Calcutta, Subhashis is the brother and playing partner of Debashish Bhattacharya, an incredible virtuoso on Hindustani slide guitar, a remarkable hybrid instrument with both melody and sympathetic strings. "I met Subhashis through Debashish," Bob says. "They're both great artists, and deserve much more exposure in world music circles." Interestingly, Debashish was a student of Brij Bhusan Kabra, who introduced the steel guitar to Indian classical music. Brij's steel guitar teacher, Garney Nyss, studied with the legendary Tau Moe, who toured and taught throughout India in the 1940s. Born and raised in Hawai'i, Tau made his first recording in 1929 and his last recording in 1989, with Bob. In between, he traveled the globe spreading the gospel of Hawaiian music with his wife, Rose Kaohu Moe, and their children, Dorian and Lani. The Moe's story is full of adventure, drama and music. Today, at 92, Tau continues to play steel and anxiously awaits the completion of the documentary that Bob and filmmaker Terry Zwigof have begun.

This song was also recorded in this fast tempo by Gabby Pahinui on **THE RABBIT ISLAND MUSIC FESTIVAL** (Panini 1004), and is sometimes also played as a slow waltz. Gabby recorded it as part of his famous **Hula Medley** around 1946 (reissued on [THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY GUITAR](#) – Hana Ola 24000, a collection of the earliest recorded slack key tracks from the 1940s.), and on his great album **PURE GABBY** (Hula 567).

Both guitarists beautifully and prominently feature an open D note of the first string in their two different tunings when playing their solos and accompaniments. This 6th note of the F scale produces the sweet sound in their respective tunings. Bob plays in the key of F in the G Tuning, which lends a unique sound, especially when he plays a barred note

on the first string, and then quickly releases the bar with a pull-off to produce the open D note.

7. *Ahoe Hakuloa* (instrumental)

Led: Santa Cruz Baritone in C Wahine Tuning (C–G–D–G–B–D), tuned down to Bb

Bob: 1931 National Hawaiian guitar in G Major Tuning, tuned up to Bb

Led's aloha for Tahiti and has inspired him to learn a number of Tahitian songs, including this beautiful waltz in a medium tempo. "It has a very late-19th century melody," says Bob. "Led and I really enjoy varying the theme and improvising new melodic and rhythmic phrases. In order for these little waves of rhythm-within-the-rhythm to happen, we have to open our ears and eyes wider toward each other and toward the music. The little sixteenth-note motifs which bounce back and forth demonstrate this mutually attentive playfulness." Note the interesting use of two different tunings not normally in the key of Bb, but tuned to that key, again producing two different and complimentary sounds.

PROGRAM 2

8. *In the Saddle* (instrumental)

Led: 8 string 'ukulele in Standard Tuning (G–C–E–A), played in the key of F

Bob: Santa Cruz Brozman Baritone Model 6 string guitar in G Major Tuning, tuned down to F

This Bob and Led original received its name because of the galloping pace that evoked the image of two thoroughbreds running wild across an open field. It begins with a slow, soulful introduction reminiscent of the Sons of Hawai'i, the Gabby Band and other great slack key ensembles of the past. "From our live shows we picked up the habit of beginning certain songs with rubato," says Bob. He compares this to the alaap in the North India raga. "Traditionally, the alaap helps relax the audience and the musicians, opening everyone's ears and laying the harmonic foundation for the music to follow." Sensitive to nature, like all great Hawaiian musicians, Led describes this very fluid form of introduction as "making waterfalls."

On this track, Bob again plays slack key guitar. "I've got to start catching up," he jokes, adding with admiration that Led is not only a great slack key guitarist, but also an 'ukulele virtuoso, a great autoharp picker, a bassist and an increasingly accomplished fine acoustic steel player. With Led's great 'ukulele virtuosity here, and Bob's great three-finger rolls, both musicians evoke the beautiful sound of Mexican and South American harps.

9. *He 'Olu La No'u (That's Just Fine For Me)* (instrumental)

Led: 6 string guitar in G Major Tuning

Bob: 1927 Weissenborn Hawaiian guitar in G Major Tuning

"This is a rather obscure song from 1920s," says Bob. "As far as I know, it was only recorded twice: by Sol Ho'opi'i and by Kalama's Quartet. It's rarely played in modern

Hawaiian repertoire. We play it in an old 1920s hula tempo." Note the beautiful harmony playing often used on the first and second phrases of some of the verses. This song evokes a great kolohe (rascal) feeling.

10. **Aloha Ia O Wai'anae** (vocal)

Led: 6 string guitar in G Major Tuning, capoed up 2 frets to the key of A

Bob: 1931 National Hawaiian guitar in G Major Tuning, tuned up to A

Returning to Led's flower-scented leo ki'eki'e (falsetto) vocal style, **Aloha Ia O Wai'anae** is a mele pana (song of place) describing love for O'ahu's rural and picturesque Leeward Coast, Wai'anae. Written by Kaleiwahea and Piliaau, **Aloha Ia O Wai'anae** has enjoyed widespread popularity with wonderful recordings by the exquisite Kahauanu Lake Trio (on KA PO'OKELA, VOL. 2 – Hula 581), falsetto singer Dean Lum, The Makaha Sons of Ni'ihau, and Pandanus Club. Led previously recorded it with Hui 'Ohana, and on his instrumental album LIMA WELA (Leahi 2001 – out of print).

Led sends out the song me ke aloha pumehana (with warm aloha) to his many friends in Wai'anae. Bob says that he plays the verses in tribute to Tau Moe's 1920s rhythmic sensibility, adding an original technique of left hand open string damping that he alternates with sliding "chimed" (harmonics) chords. Here both guitarists capo and tune their G Major Tuning up to the key of A to match Led's vocal range. As in traditional hula style, each verse is repeated.

11. **Ku'u Ipo Onaona** (instrumental)

Led: 6 string guitar in G Major Tuning, capoed up 5 frets to the key of C

Bob: Bear Creek Kona Hawaiian guitar in G Major Tuning, tuned up to the key of C

The title translates as "My Lovely Sweetheart," an affectionate term that finds its way into countless Hawaiian songs. Led says he learned this Maddy Lam composition from his uncle, the late, great slack key guitarist Fred Punahoa. Led has recorded it three times before, including it on his album [LED LIVE - SOLO](#) (Dancing Cat 38008). "The songs Uncle Fred and my mom and dad shared with me are still the ones I love to play the most," he says. "We both love playing this one in many different tunings and tempos," Bob adds. "It's the kind of song you never tire of playing. Each solo energizes the other guy's next one." The high-pitched and capoed tunings add a bit of extra sparkle.

12. **Kukuna O Ka La** (instrumental)

Led: Taylor 12 string guitar in C Wahine "Leonard's C" Tuning, capoed up 4 frets to the key of E

Bob: National Brozman Baritone Tricone guitar in G Major Tuning, tuned down to E

Variously attributed to Emma Bush, Rosalie Flores and Johnny Noble, **Kukuna O Ka La** translates as "The Rays of the Sun." It is also the name of a popular lei made from the mangrove tree. For the recording, Led switched to the deep, rich sonorities of 12 string, an instrument he has recently taken a liking to. Bob's slack key and bottleneck guitar (played upright with a glass slide on the little finger of his left hand) part on a Baritone National adds a biting piano-like bass and chunky staccato. Again this song features

beautiful solos and interplay between the two musicians. Note the great muting by both at the end of the song. This is a deep Hawaiian blues–type song with a hot day feeling. The late, great slack key guitarist Sonny Chillingworth recorded a excellent version on his album, [SONNY SOLO](#) (Dancing Cat 38005), and Led's late uncle, Abraham Konanui, recorded a version that inspired Sonny (and Led and Bob as well) which is included on the recording [THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY GUITAR](#) (Hana Ola 24000). Note again the use of two different tunings, both capoed or tuned to the key of E.

13. **Pua Be Still** (instrumental)

Led: Tacoma 6 string guitar in G Major Tuning

Bob: 1927 Weissenborn guitar in G Major Tuning

Many Hawaiian songs use highly visual and poetic imagery to describe a special place or a meaningful experience. Such works of art can be enjoyed by anyone, but, like photographs, they bring back the deepest memories to those who were there. **Pua** (Flower) **Be Still**, by falsetto great Bill Ali'ioha Lincoln, takes us to Kohala, his boyhood home. A gentle morning breeze lifts the aroma of Be Still flowers to two people who are so close that only the breeze is there to join them. Two close companions enjoy the scent, the sea and a timeless moment together. Slack key guitarist Keola Beamer notes that the Be Still flower is often planted alongside graveyards as a loving testament to the departed, and as solace for both those who visit and those whose souls are forever still. Bob and Led play this song with deep feeling in the Hawaiian blues style.

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